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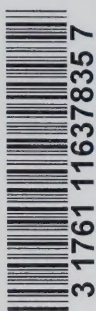


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John Roberts, Minister

John Roberts, Ministre



Background Paper 8

FIRST THINGS FIRST: EQUITY FOR  
WOMEN THROUGH PAID SKILL  
DEVELOPMENT LEAVE

Jane Adams

# Skill Development Leave Task Force

Background  
Paper

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Background Paper 8

FIRST THINGS FIRST: EQUITY FOR  
WOMEN THROUGH PAID SKILL  
DEVELOPMENT LEAVE

Jane Adams

Canadian Congress for Learning  
Opportunities for Women

March 1983

This is one in a series of background papers prepared for the Task Force on Skill Development Leave. The opinions expressed are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Task Force or the Department of Employment and Immigration.



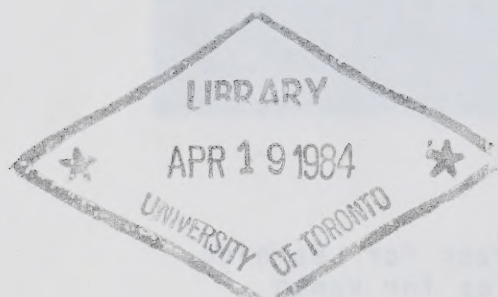


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## PART I: STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

This brief is in support of a National policy for Paid Skills Development Leave.

### The Purpose

First, to examine the barriers that prevent women's access to Skills Development.

Second, to investigate and propose various methods and policies by which a system of Paid Skills Development Leave will function equitably in our society.

Finally, to recommend a framework within which a just and creative national educational policy can be built: one that will foster true economic equality for women in Canadian society.





PART II: SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This brief is prepared at a point in our history when women are confronted with structural unemployment of 13.5%,<sup>1</sup> widespread deskilling of jobs, increasing vulnerability due to obsolescent skills, lack of influence, and undereducation.

The prospect a 50-70% loss of jobs in areas largely staffed by women over the next 25<sup>2</sup> years is a cause of great concern. The suffering and dislocation caused by this crisis as a result of technological innovation are not easy to address through any one measure, but it is our opinion that through a system of retraining, redeployment and life-long learning the largest number of Canadian women will be able to lead productive working lives.

Economically, as workers and as learners, women are in need. The average annual income for women is approximately \$11,741<sup>3</sup> and 60% of women are living alone, are single parents, or are married to someone who earns less than \$10,000 a year.<sup>4</sup> The average annual wage for women is 60% of the average wage for men. For these reasons, there must be no extra financial burden put on women by a Paid Skills Development Leave program which seeks to retrain the workforce for the new technological reality.

The Canadian Congress for Learning Opportunities for Women (CCLOW) has prepared this Brief in the belief that all citizens have a right to skilled, productive work, and that access to such work is a major political issue of our time. Women's rights to full-time permanent employment is a question of equity which must be seen as a socio-economic need compatible with, and equal to, efficiency in production. The principles of equality of opportunity and individual

freedom to take an active part in selection of training and career goals support our interest in dealing, through a Paid Skills Development program, with the special interests of homemakers, native women, immigrant women and those with literacy needs. Women urgently require a Leave program which will overcome the barriers to education and skills development which are common elements in women's experience.

Essentially, the barriers to skill development for women are: expenses of training, lack of living allowance during training, age limits, discriminatory practices of educational institutions, lack of provisions for part-time workers, family responsibilities, interrupted working life due to child bearing and child care, lack of flexibility in the delivery of educational programs, lack of opportunity for advancement in the labour market, lack of information about programs, and lack of educational and career counselling.

The measures which we propose to assist and guide policymakers in the development of a Paid Skills Development Leave program accessible to women are indicated in the following Recommendations.

Recommendation 1. That the federal government vastly expand the range of training opportunities and options for women through a national policy on Paid Skills Development Leave, particularly in the areas of technology-related training, training for growth industry occupations, and industrial training. A target of a minimum of 50% female participation must be established for the full range of courses in each of these areas.

Recommendation 2. That vastly expanded pre-employment and/or upgrading training be provided to ensure the success of measures



specified above.

Recommendation 3. That equity of access for working women and homemakers to Paid Skills Development Leave be ensured by the inclusion of equal opportunity in the legislation covering Paid Skills Development Leave, and further, that affirmative action programs be established as the mechanism by which equal opportunity is implemented.

Recommendation 4. That, when Paid Skills Development Leave cannot be granted at once to all applicants, priority shall be given to women with the greatest educational need:

- those who require increased skills due to redeployment necessitated by technological change;
- those threatened with unemployment;
- those with low incomes whose income potential will increase as a result of such training;
- those with the least training in the enterprise;
- those with literacy needs.

Recommendation 5. That selection of employees for Paid Skills Development Leave subject to the priorities in Recommendation #4 be made by committees composed of unions, workers' organizations, and employers, and overseen by the National Education and Training Agency.

Recommendation 6. That Skills Development Leave taken by women be paid 100% from a fund established by industry and government for this purpose. Such payment will include training allowances, tuition, travel costs, course material, and child care. Where employed, women will suffer no loss of wages, benefits, seniority, job status or security as a result of being granted Paid Skills Development Leave.

Prepayment by the employee shall not be required.

Recommendation 7. That the federal government establish a National Education and Training Agency with an influential women's education branch, as well as 50% representation of women in all levels of the directorate.

Recommendation 8. That the National Education and Training Agency work with educational institutions to provide:

- (a) Catch-up programs for women in the sciences and mathematics.
- (b) Special up-dating courses to allow employees to update their qualifications and to be recertified for a career they had previously interrupted.
- (c) Universal application of mature admissions standards in educational institutions, and greater recognition of work and life experience as credit toward professional qualifications.
- (d) Greater recognition by colleges and universities of courses completed at other institutions (course articulation).
- (e) Flexibility of course delivery as a result of extensive use of alternative educational delivery techniques at times and locations compatible with:
  - block release;
  - day release;
  - part-time study leave;
  - correspondence/distance learning.
- (f) Greater availability of certificate, diploma and degree courses in accordance with flexible delivery techniques for:
  - trade and technical training;
  - courses for personal, social and cultural development;



- literacy training;
- upgrading courses;
- professional courses;
- general education;
- labour education.

Recommendation 9. That the federal and provincial governments create, in all public educational institutions, special adult education departments, to build on the examples of Atkinson College of York University in Ontario, Athabaska University in Alberta, and the Open Learning Institute in British Columbia.

Recommendation 10. That Paid Skills Development Leave programs provide for compensatory time off for participants.

Recommendation 11. That homemakers have full access to Paid Skills Development Leave programs.

Recommendation 12. That opportunity for successful completion of training programs be guaranteed if interrupted by the illness of a child or a pregnancy.

Recommendation 13. That all Skill Development Leave provisions include part-time employees.

Recommendation 14. That the Women's Education Branch of the National Education and Training Agency establish (through every educational institution, community agency and other accessible location) education and career path counselling services which will teach women learning skills, identify learning needs, provide information about skills needed by industry, develop short introductory courses to familiarize women with adult education, and conduct post-employment counselling.

Recommendation 15. That women have freedom of choice from among courses made available by industry, educational institutions and community agencies.

Recommendation 16. That provision be made for "study organizers" to assist in information dissemination regarding training and educational programs to workers and organization of study plans.

Recommendation 17. That the National Education and Training Agency as well as special departments for adult students in public educational institutions fully utilize adult education training methods which emphasize working from experience, participation and student centred seminars.

Recommendation 18. That Skills Development Leave programs have no age limits.

Recommendation 19. That employers offer clearly defined paths to promotion and advancement to workers participating in Skills Development Leave.

Recommendation 20. That Skills Development Leave programs provide for coverage of work stations during employee absence due to Skills Development Leave.

PART III: CONTEXT WITHIN WHICH BRIEF IS PRESENTED

Every day we are confronted with more evidence that technological innovations are rapidly multiplying the disadvantages women have traditionally encountered in the workplace. The overall problem is compounded by the increasing number of women who are entering the workforce--the vast majority of them out of urgent economic necessity. The experience of most of these women is:

1. Structural unemployment.
2. Widespread deskilling of jobs.
3. Increasing vulnerability due to obsolescent skills, lack of influence, and undereducation.

In the 1980s the private sector has decided to strive for an increase in productivity and a drive to meet international industrial competition with increased investment in high technology, with the assistance of government assisted or guaranteed loans. The immediate results of this strategy can be found in industrial cities across the country: widespread unemployment with the consequent economic and social costs being borne by the community and the family. In this context, women in industry, who have always found themselves "the last hired and the first fired," are now the advance victims of technological change. Current Statistics Canada figures show that women are losing jobs at a rate of 53% greater than men.<sup>5</sup> This means that in the service sector (40% of Canada's labour market), banks, insurance companies, printing, communications,<sup>6</sup> etc., where women have found the most job prospects over the last 20 years, and where the "job ghettos" are established; the erosion is quickly



accelerating.

Thirty-four percent of the Canadian female labour force, 1.5 million women, hold clerical jobs. With the arrival of high technology in the office, manufacturers now claim increases in productivity from 150 to 400 percent. This means that for every woman retained to feed the machines, between two and five can be let go.<sup>7</sup>

Many corporations, instead of expanding their activities, freeing their workers to do more creative work, are cutting staff. If this present trend continues, it is estimated that within 25 years, 50 to 70% of today's jobs will no longer exist.<sup>8</sup>

The greater part of the potentially unemployed in the service industries are women. Obviously, the consequent social costs will be staggering. And with governments, both federal and provincial, reeling under heavy budget deficits and busily cutting back on most social services, our research leads us to believe that Paid Skills Development Leave may begin to ameliorate the economic and social crisis we are irrevocably facing. The role such Leave can play is through the introduction of a program of life-long learning, whereby workers move in and out of the workforce, building and growing on new skills, knowledge and development. This movement will allow for greater numbers of the workforce to be actually employed at any given time.

Velo Lehtinin, in "Approaching a Permanent Educational System," states that, in regard to the problem of unemployment:

Slowing down development of production technology or creating jobs artificially are not, in the long run, intelligent responses. Prolongation of the basic and/or middle stages of youth education is not wise from the standpoint of either educational or manpower policy. The most attractive outlook for social policy and for an improvement of the quality of life would be opened up if a sufficiently large number of adults could be disengaged from working life for training, and their posts filled by unemployed persons.<sup>9</sup>

Educational leave provisions, as well as accommodating some of the unemployed, could also give clerical workers, particularly, the opportunity to develop technological qualifications. However, since most of these people are women, they cannot (under present circumstances) save enough money to enable them to enter full-time training or educational institutions.<sup>10</sup> As well, these employees have "the fewest opportunities for educational leave and staff training. . . . They have particular problems upgrading their qualifications because of family and related considerations."<sup>11</sup>

We cannot, however, ignore the irony of the situation: "Skills Development" can be, and often is, a hollow advantage for many women because it is often retraining to perform much more tedious and repetitive work than they had done before.

Whilst part of the rationale for recurrent education is rightly phrased in terms of "the need to equip the workforce with new skills," . . . the trend is for a limited number of workers to develop these new and more sophisticated skills, and for much larger numbers either to be confronted with jobs emptied of their original skill content or to be rendered unemployed.<sup>12</sup>

Deskilling is very much a part of the current debate on skills development, and this is a bitter realization for women who are essentially undereducated when they enter the workforce.

The problem is that women most vulnerable to job loss, those in the clerical fields, are those least likely to have acquired the basic science skills, particularly mathematics and physics, necessary to gain access to any technological training program.<sup>13</sup>

While these disadvantages continue to accelerate, women's numbers in the labour force are rapidly increasing: by 1990, over 75% of women aged 25 to 54 will be in the labour force, either employed or seeking employment. The female participation rate will approach that

of males by the year 2000.<sup>14</sup> This increase is a result of economic need: 60% of women, according to the Dodge Report on "Labour Market Developments in the 1980's," are either living alone, single parents, or are married to someone who earns less than \$10,000 a year and so must work outside the home. It is important to keep in mind that these projections are within the context of a current unemployment rate of 13.5%.<sup>15</sup>

In 1983, the context of women's work in Canada, as we have outlined it, is one of extreme vulnerability. This lack of job security is a direct result of the appropriation of employees' rights to jobs through the application of technological processes: processes women are unable to defend themselves against because of their ghettoization, inadequate training, lack of retraining opportunities, and the widespread discrimination which has made them largely poor and powerless.



PART IV: THE CONSTITUENCY OF THE CCLOW

This Brief is presented, in the interests of all Canadian women, by the Canadian Congress for Learning Opportunities for Women, the national organization concerned with the development and promotion of learning opportunities for women. The health and well-being of the nation rests in the full and creative utilization of its human resources. To the extent that women are undereducated and underemployed, Canada suffers a severe loss of human capital. The country needs the energy and ability of women; the community cannot afford to have women either dead-ended in the labour market or unemployed.

CCLOW's constituency is made up of women working for pay, unskilled women, homemakers, native women, immigrant women, women from racial minorities, professional women, and the unemployed. Working class women, especially those from disadvantaged racial, ethnic, and regional groups, face double jeopardy. "They are the most likely to be forced to work because of economic necessity and the least likely to have obtained the skills, training and education to qualify them for anything but the most menial and poorly paid jobs."<sup>16</sup> Unskilled women and women in small or declining industries are facing the greatest danger of unemployment and, as the European experience shows, they are the least likely groups to benefit from unrealistic retraining programs.<sup>17</sup>

Among the members of our constituency with the greatest need are native women. For example, the present unemployment rate for native women in Winnipeg is 40%.<sup>18</sup>

Our constituency also includes women who aspire to higher education. There are, currently, considerable difficulties standing in the way of their gaining access to such education while they are employed. Elimination of such difficulties would help to improve the status and condition of all Canadian women.

We especially include homemakers among our constituency for the purposes of this Brief on Skills Development Leave. As does the Bremen, West Germany, Educational Leave Law, we claim homemakers as quasi-employees because of their economic dependence.<sup>19</sup> We define a homemaker as a person who has not worked in the labour force for a number of years but has, during those years, worked in the home providing unpaid services for family members. Homemakers have a particular claim on Skills Development provisions, first because of their service to the community as a whole, and second because of the discrimination they experience from institutions which have failed to make necessary provisions for their reintegration into the skilled labour force and the ranks of the employed.

PART V: PRINCIPLES WHICH HAVE GUIDED THE PREPARATION  
OF THIS BRIEF

1. Right to Skilled Employment

As the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) points out, it is often those who contribute most to economic growth who are among the first to become its victims, through unemployment. "Because workers contribute to technological advance and social change, the state and the employers have a responsibility to retrain those workers to function in the world they have helped to create."<sup>20</sup>

In several countries of Europe, the governments are at least trying to monitor the trend toward layoffs and displacement.

In France, Greece, the Netherlands and Spain, prior authorization of a public authority or tribunal is required before a reduction may take place; termination of employment without such authorization entitles the affected worker to either reinstatement or special compensation and in some cases makes the employer liable to prosecution.<sup>21</sup>

Essentially, women in Canada are fighting out the issue of the survival of labour because new technology has turned upside down the traditional equation of investments = jobs. Now, investment means fewer jobs.

Under existing legislation, workers and the unions find themselves in a no-win position when seeking to protect those about to be displaced as a result of technological innovation, because the worker (or union), in accepting compensatory services such as training, counselling, or money, is in effect "selling" the job. It is, however, not HER job, or the union's job, to sell. Jobs are the property and the right of citizens and jobs are part of our resource



as a nation. Great public expense goes into creating a support system for business and industry (government loans and tax subsidies, health care, utilities, highways, education, social services, etc.). The private sector cannot assume the right to buy off the worker currently occupying a position supported by the public.

For these reasons, the CLOW believes that there should be no reduction of the total workforce in any industry as a result of technological change. This includes no layoff as a result of such change, and any attrition should be made up for in new hiring. Retraining and redeployment, either within the industry or through government intervention into other industries, of all workers threatened with displacement, is the only remedy for the current crisis.

## 2. Access to Jobs is a Major Political Issue

As Lenore Rogers, president of CLOW, states, "Women have for too long been pulled in and out of the labour force at the whim of industry and political considerations. Women are in the labour force because they need to be."<sup>22</sup> It is important to look at the relationship between objectives of economic efficiency and social equity in this light.

## 3. Skilled Work Has an Inherent Social and Personal Value in Our Society

The primary motivation for people, both men and women, in furthering their education is to improve their lot in life. Education leads to improved work opportunities and greater income. Work is one of the major activities that provides us with structures around which to organize our lives. It gives us a feeling of self worth and a sense of being part of a larger whole.<sup>23</sup>

#### 4. Equity and Efficiency of Production

Equity and efficiency are compatible concepts considering the tens of thousands of people affected by the current adjustment to technology. Short-term objectives which are served by retraining the most skilled workers and displacing the rest will result in consequences we are already starting to see take shape: structural unemployment and social upheaval. This does not add up to long-term "efficiency" of any sort. The Centre for Educational Research and Innovation of the OECD suggests that:

The apparent efficiency of providing training opportunities only for those who have already shown themselves capable of profiting is considerably reduced if one takes into consideration the wider consequences of further depressing the position of the unskilled: one might say that the COSTS of treating the problems thus created absorb the increased wealth thus generated. The opposition of efficiency to equity is frequently misleading--often enough, at any rate, to need careful scrutiny when used as a justification for any policy proposal.<sup>24</sup>

Industry's interest in efficiency must be balanced by the state's intervention on behalf of equity through cooperation with industry in retraining for working people.

On the question of productivity, Paid Skills Development Leave may offer a partial solution to the problems of labour turnover and absenteeism. The morale of the worker would greatly benefit from the positive and creative activity of learning which, in turn, would increase in the learner's goodwill toward the industry providing such development.

#### 5. Equality of Opportunity

Our principal objective for Paid Skills Development Leave is to promote equality of opportunity for women: fundamentally, this

program must provide training necessary to maintain and enhance employment. Paid Skills Development Leave must enable women who have not had the benefit of adequate general education or vocational training to complete their education at the secondary or higher level, and to so improve their skills.<sup>25</sup>

#### 6. Freedom of Choice in Training and Education

Women need maximum access to self-initiated education and to a free choice of programs made available by industry, educational institutions and community agencies in order to be flexible workers able to move readily from one field to another; to develop fully as human beings; and to preserve our tradition of educated self-determination.

Forecasters' inability to accurately predict training and education needs for future employment has never been more evident than it is now, with confusion and insecurity on every side. Lack of clarity about the type of employment for which they might choose to be retrained is a source of great concern to women. We therefore refer to the criterion which serves as accurately as any other guide to our development as a people: the fulfillment of the unique talents and abilities of every individual, according to her own choices and enthusiasms. All educational leave programs must augment industrial training and general education with access to courses for personal, social and cultural growth, and such development must be fully funded through the Paid Skills Development Leave program.



7. Illiteracy Must Be Addressed by Skills Development Leave

There are an estimated one million Canadians who cannot read or write. Another four million are functionally illiterate in that they cannot read, write or do mathematics at a level necessary to function adequately in society, and the majority are women. The rate of unemployment and occupational accidents among this group is particularly high.<sup>26</sup>

8. Paid Skills Development Leave Will Assist Native and Immigrant Women

A system of Paid Skills Development Leave which focuses on the least advantaged of our population (among this group are native and immigrant women) will positively aid their integration into the workforce.

9. Special Measures are Needed to Achieve Equality in Working Life

"Like so many other social programs, paid educational leave may aid least the ones for whom it was intended unless active, positive measures are taken," says the OECD. "It is a well-known fact that, in matters involving training, if free rein is given to natural mechanisms, the only result can be increasing inequality."<sup>27</sup> Well-educated people are very familiar and comfortable with the processes and benefits of further education. The less well educated will fail to achieve the advantages offered by Paid Skills Development Leave unless support mechanisms are an integral part of the whole program.

Finally, in relation to barriers to Skills Development, these principles, which encompass the personal and economic value of a

creative and productive working life, the aim of equity, literacy and the needs of natives and immigrants, all support our belief that there is an urgent and immediate demand for legislated Paid Skills Development Leave. Positive, active measures toward affirmative action will truly make these educational resources accessible to women who have, all their lives, experienced discrimination in education, training and employment.

PART VI: DEFINING "PAID SKILLS DEVELOPMENT LEAVE"

The concept of Paid Skills Development Leave includes the people who will receive such development, the skills to be developed, the delivery systems for training and education, and the funding of such systems.

In the interests of women, our objective is the creation of Paid Skills Development Leave legislation. These laws will provide for those in the community with the greatest educational need: both full- and part-time employees and homemakers.

Paid Skills Development Leave will provide for education and training of employees without loss of earnings, job security, benefits, status or opportunity for promotion. Such leave will offer a wide range of opportunities for skills development through courses of varying duration, both full- and part-time, at educational institutions, community agencies and industry's in-house facilities.

We recommend that the identification of the needed skills and the content of the training, that is, the skills to be developed, be ascertained with a view to socio-economic development. A synthesis of the interest of both industry and of individual workers will be found in planning for life-long learning of technical and general education and personal growth and development. As the Centre for Educational Research and Innovation (CERI) points out:

The importance of educational leave resides in the fact that it is both a component of the employment and training policies pursued by governments and employers and a stage on the road enabling the individual to exercise greater freedom in organising his own life.<sup>28</sup>

This synthesis will benefit all segments of society as well as ensure employees' enthusiasm, an important ingredient for successful



completion of courses of study.

Training, aiming not only at general education but also linked to the actual problems and needs for the development of society and enterprise, significantly increases individual motivation. Such training can also better serve social change and progress.<sup>28</sup>

The method of funding Paid Skills Development Leave which we would support should equitably distribute the cost of all leave programs among enterprises and between industry and government. Involvement in the program must be mandatory for all enterprises in order not to create imbalance, or an advantage to companies that choose not to offer Leave to the economic detriment of those that do.

The funds provided for by Paid Skills Development Leave legislation must cover all salaries and benefits, as well as costs such as course materials, tuition, travel expenses for participants, child care and living allowance for homemakers.

The expense of such a program would be considerable. However, we are of the opinion that, if at least 2% of the workforce at any given time were to be on Paid Skills Development Leave, a sizeable number of workers would, by necessity, be added to payrolls across the country, thereby decreasing unemployment. And it is not as if the unemployed do not cost the state money as it is: last year, the cost of Unemployment Insurance Benefits were 8.6-billion dollars.<sup>30</sup> Creative use of such monies is what is required right now. Professor Louis Emmerij, Rector of the Institute of Social Studies in The Hague, says that:

Social security money [is] more and more used to alleviate or to hide structural unemployment problems . . . and it would be more honest to recognize this fact and to separate out those funds.

He suggests that some people will favour using such funds to create

more jobs, and this, he agrees, is a first priority. However, he adds:

What are we to do when maximal effort in that respect is not sufficient to supply all those who present themselves on the labour market with productive work. "Productive work" is indeed the key phrase. . . . Is it not much better and also more productive to use the "structural money," not only to give people the opportunity to return to the educational system, but also time to do other things, including voluntary activities in the public sector for example? The educational part of creative leave would make people more productive, more flexible, and in general more inclined to follow and anticipate changes in their work environment.<sup>31</sup>

The Report of the Commission of Inquiry on Educational Leave and Productivity, 1979, in its investigation of educational leave in Europe, found that the expense of an educational leave program does not pose a particular hardship to industry:

The right to educational leave has not caused major disruptions to company operations nor has the cost created onerous and unacceptable burdens on industry. Educational leave policy has been most successful in expanding vocational training thereby improving the vocational competence of the labour force and in providing opportunities to workers' representatives so that they might acquire the knowledge necessary to perform their duties in an informed and responsible manner. It has been least successful to date in overcoming educational inequalities.<sup>32</sup>

We believe that, in the Recommendations proposed throughout this Brief, the issue of inequities has been addressed in a manner that will provide guidelines for the development of just policies for Paid Skills Development Leave and also the criteria for its successful implementation.





PART VII: ASSURING ACCESS FOR WOMEN TO PAID SKILLS

DEVELOPMENT LEAVE

In order to determine the kind and quality of the provisions necessary to guarantee access for women to Paid Skills Development Leave, it is necessary to look at three issues:

1. Existing barriers to women's skill development in Canada.
2. Measures which must be taken to overcome these current barriers.
3. The European experience in implementing Paid Skills Development Leave. (Our research reveals certain provisions, or lack of provisions, which hinder women's access to such leave. It is essential that we benefit from this experience and ensure that our Canadian program has appropriate regulations.)

This section will deal with these three issues in a way which will provide guidelines and criteria for policy makers in developing a policy of Paid Skills Development Leave.

1. Existing Barriers to Women's Skill Development in Canada

The definitive barrier to skills development is the historical inequality of women in the education system and the Canadian workforce. The inequality is reflected in the fact that women's average wage is 60% of the average male wage.

Active measures must be undertaken to dismantle these structures in order to create an equitable order, one which includes women as full, equal partners.

The major barriers to skills development for women are ghettoization of jobs, poverty, lack of financial resources, educational barriers, family responsibilities, interrupted working life, status as part-time employees, and lack of career path counselling.

A. Ghettoization of women's jobs. As Patricia McDermott points out in "The New Demeaning of Work,"

It is more difficult for women to move into new areas of employment than it is for men. This is mainly because in the Canadian labour market, occupations tend to be identified with either men or women. Not only is our labour market segmented by sex, but the range of jobs open to women is much narrower than that open to men. Male workers can move more easily into primary, secondary and service sector work, and the actual number of occupational categories open to them considerably outnumber those available to women. . . . Even the more limited range of job categories open to women tends to be primarily service work, the area that is the most severely affected by the introduction of microtechnology.

B. Poverty. Many women cannot afford education and training for skill development. In Canada, women are poor. Their average wage is \$11,741, while men's average wage is \$18,537.<sup>33</sup> More than 30% of women with full-time jobs earn less than \$10,000, and 36% of female-headed families are low income.<sup>34</sup> Women's experience as employees is that of being economically penalized by lower wages, and the wage differential is increasing, not decreasing.

Women who try to finance their own training often lack financial resources. Female students have more difficulty borrowing money from banks, married female students are usually ineligible for student assistance,<sup>35</sup> and may not have access to their spouse's income for study purposes. Female students are likely to receive smaller grants and bursaries; they are also less likely to obtain summer employment

and they earn less money from that employment than their male counterparts.<sup>36</sup>

For women workers who choose to study part-time in order to develop their qualifications, many will find that government policy in their province regarding grant and loan eligibility penalizes part-time students.<sup>37</sup>

C. Educational barriers. France and Italy have used Paid Skills Development Leave as a means of strengthening and reforming the existing educational systems, and we encourage our policy makers to take this opportunity for such progressive development in Canada.

The barriers for women for skills development which we have identified in the educational field are:

(i) Lack of catch-up programs. The great majority of Canadian women are seriously handicapped in this technologically oriented society because of their general lack of training in science and mathematics. To quote from the Report of the Royal Commission on the Status of Women in Canada

Many more boys than girls are taking vocational courses such as industrial and mechanical trades, construction trades [etc.]. Although the percentages of girls and boys who enroll in the academic programs are roughly equal, boys predominate in the study of mathematics and science and girls tend to concentrate on social studies.<sup>38</sup>

There are virtually no catch-up programs or "remedial" courses for working women in these vital areas of knowledge, and women are therefore excluded from many retraining schemes which demand science and math backgrounds.

(ii) Lack of up-dating programs. Women with some university training find that their interrupted careers, due to family responsibilities, may result in loss of credit for courses taken



because most universities do not provide updating. That is, few universities recognize the need for refresher courses for those who have been away from their field for some years.

(iii) Lack of mature student provisions. Working or life-experience is often not assessed in order to satisfy entrance requirements in many community colleges or universities, or as credit towards professional qualifications.

(iv) Lack of course articulation. Courses completed in some colleges are often not recognized in others.<sup>39</sup>

(b) Lack of flexibility in times, location, and duration of courses. Courses at community colleges and universities are geared to the convenience of young people. As Jill McCalla Vickers and June Adams point out in "But Can You Type?",

Part time students with employment and family responsibilities cannot easily be made to fit the system. Such things as exams for night courses held during the day, the requirement that all students physically attend registration when two letters and a cheque would suffice, and the denial of day-care facilities to part time students are all examples of this inflexibility.<sup>40</sup>

(vi) Limited subject matter. Courses available to part-time students at both the community college and university level are extremely limited. Virtually no professional training is available, and few senior instructors are available to part-time students.

(vii) Length of courses. The extended duration of some training programs makes them prohibitive to workers with a minimum of time.

D. Necessity for women to fulfill family responsibilities.

Working mothers have two full-time jobs, and this is their greatest block to undertaking further training. There are simply no more hours in the day to accommodate study. As well, quality,

conveniently-located child care is usually unavailable during times when courses are offered, often the evening. Simple fatigue is also a major issue here.

E. Interrupted working life due to child bearing and child care.

Women hesitate to undertake retraining or further education when interruption due to sickness of a child or pregnancy may prevent successful completion.

F. Part-time employees are denied benefits and opportunities.

Seventy-three percent of all part-time employees are women, and they are currently denied many health, welfare and other benefits, including job security and union representation in many cases. Their average annual earnings are only \$4,202.<sup>41</sup> Retraining and upgrading are also usually denied part-timers.

G. Lack of career path counselling. It is unreasonable to expect women to overcome years of adverse conditioning to plunge, unaided, into career change and retraining. At the present time there is insufficient counselling and career development training available to women. The undereducated are especially in need of such counselling.

People with little education are more likely to regard anything new with apprehension and even distrust: not because they are not interested, but usually because they do not immediately recognize what it holds for them. It is this that gives the impression that they are less interested than those with a better education.<sup>42</sup>

2. Positive Measures Which Must Be Undertaken to Overcome Barriers

The barriers enumerated above are only some of the formidable obstacles to women's achieving equity in training and education, and such discrimination against women will continue unless firm, committed

and decisive action is taken by policy makers in their design of the Paid Skills Development Leave program.

Discrimination in education denies credentials to good jobs. Without an attempt to dismantle the structural discrimination which has been built into our educational and training systems, there is virtually no access for women to skills development. (The current female participation rate in all apprenticeships is less than 3%, for example.)

Affirmative action must be integrated into Skills Development Leave legislation to overcome both long-term inequality and the new threats posed by microtechnology and the current recession. Mandatory affirmative action programs as an integral component of Paid Skills Development Leave policy cannot be avoided if justice is to be achieved. It is pointless for government to ask industry, in a competitive situation, to voluntarily take on affirmative action in this context, or any other context, because this is seen as providing an economic advantage to others who do not volunteer. The futility of "voluntary affirmative action" has been proved by the total inability of the federal government's Affirmative Action Directorate to effect even one voluntary program by any private employer to help working women, despite three years of work.

Legislated positive measures, on the other hand, are effective. In West Germany, for example, the number of trained, skilled women has doubled since the introduction of a highly flexible system of vocational training for women.<sup>44</sup> "Doubled," in the Canadian context, would still be retrogressive, but it is a hopeful note.



What women in Canada need and require is the full participation in order to make up 50% of ALL training programs under Skills Development Leave provisions. Otherwise, women's employment situation will continue to deteriorate, at enormous social and personal cost. By positive measures we mean taking sex into account in making any decision about Skills Development Leave so as to remedy discrimination. This must be a systematic, comprehensive and reviewable effort to dismantle discriminatory processes. We invite policy makers to develop a Skills Development Leave program that uses the tools of government to support equality rather than continued inequality.

Positive measures which must be undertaken to overcome training barriers are as follows:

A. Ghettoization of women's jobs. To overcome this ghettoization of women in clerical and service trades, women's full share of training in all courses must be forthcoming.<sup>45</sup>

Recommendation 1. That the federal government vastly expand the range of training opportunities and options for women through a national policy on Paid Skills Development Leave, particularly in the areas of technology-related training, training for growth industry occupations, and industrial training. A target of a minimum of 50% female participation must be established for the full range of courses in each of these areas.

Recommendation 2. That vastly expanded pre-employment and/or upgrading training be provided to ensure the success of measures specified above.

Recommendation 3. That equity of access for working women and homemakers to Paid Skills Development Leave be ensured by the inclusion of equal opportunity in the legislation covering Paid Skills Development Leave, and further, that affirmative action programs be established as the mechanism by which equal opportunity is implemented.

As a remedy for long-term disadvantages of being in a job ghetto, women workers must be given special consideration in the determination

of order in which Leave may be taken by employees.

Recommendation 4. That when Paid Skills Development Leave cannot be granted at once to all applicants, priority shall be given to women with the greatest educational need:

- those who require increased skills due to redeployment necessitated by technological change;
- those threatened with unemployment;
- those with low incomes whose income potential will increase as a result of such training;
- those with the least training in the enterprise;
- those with literacy needs.

Recommendation 5. That selection of employees for Paid Skills Development Leave subject to the priorities in Recommendation #4 be made by committees composed of unions, workers' organizations, and employers, and overseen by the National Education and Training Agency.

B. Poverty. Because cost is such a major barrier to women's skill development, and financial resources so restricted, fully financed training for women is essential.

Recommendation 6. That Skills Development Leave taken by women be paid 100% from a fund established by industry and government for this purpose. Such payment will include training allowances, tuition, travel costs, course material, and child care. Where employed, women will suffer no loss of wages, benefits, seniority, job status or security as a result of being granted Paid Skills Development Leave. Prepayment by the employee shall not be required.

C. Educational barriers. The solution to educational barriers must impact at the secondary level, the post-secondary level, and in all areas of industrial training. The Adams Commission has recommended the development of a National Education and Training Agency,

. . . directed by representatives from labour, management, education and governments with responsibilities for informing the working public, supporting research on the relationship between work and education, establishing training programs, assisting unions and professionals in establishing programs and managing the funds for vocational training, trade union education and literacy education.<sup>46</sup>

We recommend the addition of representatives of women's organizations, the voluntary sector and educational organizations to this

directorate.

This National Education and Training Agency must undertake the role, now absent in our political structure, of assessing the educational needs and problems of the citizens, and promoting, coordinating and organizing adequate solutions. This role is essential in a period of rapidly changing international economic realignment, major technological changes and industrial organization.<sup>47</sup>

Recommendation 7. That the federal government establish a National Education and Training Agency with an influential women's education branch, as well as 50% representation of women in all levels of the directorate.

Recommendation 8. That the National Education and Training Agency work with educational institutions to provide:

- (a) Catch-up programs for women in the sciences and mathematics.
- (b) Special up-dating courses to allow employees to update their qualifications and to be recertified for a career they had previously interrupted.
- (c) Universal application of mature admissions standards in educational institutions, and greater recognition of work and life experience as credit toward professional qualifications.
- (d) Greater recognition by colleges and universities of courses completed at other institutions (course articulation).
- (e) Flexibility of course delivery as a result of extensive use of alternative educational delivery techniques at times and locations compatible with:
  - block release;
  - day release;
  - part-time study leave;
  - correspondence/distance learning.
- (f) Greater availability of certificate, diploma and degree courses in accordance with flexible delivery techniques for:
  - trade and technical training;
  - courses for personal, social and cultural development;
  - literacy training;
  - upgrading courses;
  - professional courses;
  - general education;
  - labour education.

Recommendation 9. That the federal and provincial governments create, in all public educational institutions, special adult education departments, to build on the examples of Atkinson College of York University in Ontario, Athabaska University in Alberta, and the Open Learning Institute in British Columbia.



D. Necessity for women to fulfill family responsibilities. The problems associated with combining family responsibilities and work is the greatest block to women's undertaking further training. This is the conclusion of our study, as well as those of researchers into the European experience of Skills Development Leave. The primary consideration here has to be adequate time off work for training. That is, women must not be expected to undertake training over and above the hours they would normally spend at work. Widely available programs accessible to women on day release, block release and extended leave bases (as long as adequate, paid, child care provisions are made available) will help to meet these needs. Flexibility in the scheduling of courses and a wide variety of courses are also necessary.

Women working in the home are making a very special contribution to the community and the state, and should not be penalized in terms of exclusion from Paid Skills Development Leave. Just as men who served the community and state in the military during wartime received, through the Department of Veterans' Affairs, tuition fees and a living allowance for educational purposes, we recommend a system whereby individual homemakers can call upon the resources of the Paid Skills Development Leave Program.

Recommendation 10. That Paid Skills Development Leave programs provide for compensatory time off for participants.

Recommendation 11. That homemakers have full access to Paid Skills Development Leave programs.

E. Interrupted working life due to child bearing and child care.

Survey takers in West Germany found that a great deterrent to women's participation in training leave was the prospect of failure to

continue or complete a course because of responsibilities to children. This is a current difficulty for women in Canada. A condition under which women could best acquire qualifications include the guarantee that flexibility of programming will allow for the successful completion of the training program following the illness of a child or a pregnancy.<sup>48</sup>

Recommendation 12. That opportunity for successful completion of training programs be guaranteed if interrupted by the illness of a child or a pregnancy.

F. Part-time employees are denied benefits and opportunities.

Women form the greater number of part-time workers, and this marginalization will be greatly exacerbated unless training and education addresses their special needs.

Recommendation 13. That all Skill Development Leave provisions include part-time employees.

G. Lack of career path counselling. In order to overcome the disabling effects of discrimination on women as learners and as workers, to address the inhibitions and anxieties this has created, and to ensure that the women who need retraining most have access to such retraining, special facilities are necessary. Because equal access to training alone is unlikely to achieve greater equality, counselling and extra resources must be put at the disposal of women learners.

In Sweden, it has been found that, for workers unfamiliar with training,

The best type of information available is the training itself. In this sense the existence of short term leave helps to bring training and workers together. Paid educational leave of short duration offers everyone an opportunity to become familiar with adult education without any definite commitment: it only lasts a few hours or days and makes it possible for workers to attend brief courses on a variety of subjects.<sup>49</sup>

This principle has been found effective by the United Automobile Workers in Canada in introducing their members to paid educational leave for labour education. Their program "begins with a preparatory weekend, aimed at re-awakening interest in learning and in the use of democratic, participatory learning methods."<sup>50</sup>

Recommendation 14. That the Women's Education Branch of the National Education and Training Agency establish (through every educational institution, community agency and other accessible location) education and career path counselling services which will teach women learning skills, identify learning needs, provide information about skills needed by industry, develop short introductory courses to familiarize women with adult education, and conduct post-employment counselling.

Recommendation 15. That women have freedom of choice from among courses made available by industry, educational institutions and community agencies.

### 3. Provisions for Paid Skills Development Leave, from the European Experience, Necessary for Equitable Access by Women

In addition to the elements which would assist in overcoming present barriers, the Canadian Paid Skills Development Leave system must be planned so as not to create new barriers. The implementation of educational leave in Europe has given us valuable insights into the mechanisms needed to provide for an equitable Leave system. The Canadian system must, therefore, provide for study organizers aware of the needs of adult learners, and respect the rights of all groups of employees. It must also deal with the issues of workload build-up and inadequate recognition of increased ability.

A. Lack of information about courses and provisions for taking courses. In Europe, the lack of readily available information greatly impeded access to Skills Development Leave, and this was compounded by illiteracy, ignorance, and fear of education in some quarters.

Both the problems of illiteracy and fear experienced by undereducated adults can be addressed by "study organizers." In Swedish enterprises, for example, organizers elected by the workforce and trained with the help of a state subsidy provide relevant information during working hours. They are responsible in particular for making the most disadvantaged workers (in terms of education and skill) aware of the training opportunities available.<sup>51</sup>

Recommendation 16. That provision be made for "study organizers" to assist in information dissemination regarding training and educational programs to workers and organization of study plans.

B. Needs of adult learners. Studies undertaken in West Germany show that women who had practical work experience, or who were returning to the workforce, were not interested in the vocational training as it is delivered to young inexperienced students.<sup>52</sup> In France and Belgium, it was found that the method of instruction is key to the participation of unskilled and semi-skilled workers in Paid Educational Leave.<sup>53</sup>

Recommendation 17. That the National Education and Training Agency as well as special departments for adult students in public educational institutions fully utilize adult education training methods which emphasize working from experience, participation and student centred seminars.

C. Age limits. Several European countries (France, Belgium, and some states of Germany) initially set age limits for the granting of educational leave. This practice works against women returning to the workforce after child rearing, and these limits have since been abandoned.

Recommendation 18. That Skills Development Leave programs have no age limits.

D. Lack of opportunity for advancement following Skills Development Leave. Motivation to undertake training stems, to a



certain degree, from workers' perceptions that they will not only be assured of job security as a result of retaining, but that some improvement in their situation will eventually accrue to them. In France, low usage of paid educational leave was a result of frustration experienced by leave takers when new qualifications did not result in job advancement.<sup>54</sup>

Recommendation 19. That employers offer clearly defined paths to promotion and advancement to workers participating in Skills Development Leave.

E. Dealing with workload build-up during the absence of employees on leave. In France, it was discovered that resentment from co-workers who may be required to assume the work of the leave taker could deter participation in such schemes.<sup>55</sup> Other workers in Belgium and France who have to pick up their full workload upon their return may find this accumulated responsibility prohibitive.<sup>56</sup>

Recommendation 20. That Skills Development Leave programs provide for coverage of work stations during employee absence due to Skills Development Leave.

PART VIII: CONCLUSION

The analysis and recommendations in this Brief have been made against the backdrop of the difficult and unpredictable economic situation that has already hit many women very hard. The rate of unemployment is increasing, and it is very difficult at this time to see where increasing investment in high technology is going to lead.

In the meantime, we are firmly convinced that it is the responsibility of industry and government to protect the people of Canada through retraining, redeployment and a system of life-long learning for all. We must have these basic guarantees, for with them we can use our energy and imagination to shape a world and reality that is our own, and that serves the best interests of Canadians. In this Brief, we have recommended a framework within which a just and creative national policy for Paid Skills Development Leave can guide the creation of an effective and relevant education system, as well as social and economic equality for Canadian women.



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